

NEFIRS News

Volume 7, Number 1

written by Lori Loyd

March 2004

New Reporting Requirements

First, THANK YOU to everyone who is currently reporting. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the time to send us the data. This data is used to make decisions not only at the state and local levels but also nationally.

The major change in reporting is that beginning January 1, 2004 only NFIRS 5.0 reports will be accepted. We are no longer accepting NFIRS 4.1 reports unless you are submitting 2003 data.

If you use software to complete your reports your data MUST be sent electronically. You must either copy the exported data file to a floppy disk and mail to me or send the file as an email attachment. We will NOT accept paper reports from software.

If you do not have software, we will accept paper reports ONLY if they are completed on copies of the Master Forms each department received when they were trained. If you have misplaced your forms or have not received them, let me know and I will mail you another set or you may download from the Internet (see the following article "New Software Version . . ."). We no longer provide forms to complete other than the master copies. We do still have envelopes though if you need those to send in your reports.

Please send your reports in (paper or electronically) at least quarterly although monthly is preferred. If you send your data as an email attachment, please be sure to include something on the subject line that identifies the attachment as NEFIRS data. With the increase of spam and viruses, I will not open an attachment that comes from an email address I am not familiar with or with nothing in the subject line or message area. I always try to acknowledge data received by email. If you have sent data recently and have not heard back from me, please contact me and/or resend the data.

It will help you complete your NEFIRS reports if you read the NFIRS 5.0 Reminders article. Some of these reminders may look familiar and are repeated

from previous newsletters. This is because I'm still seeing these problems occurring and there are also new people completing the reports so it will help them out.

This is sent to the chief but I know that the chief isn't always the one completing the reports. Please be sure to pass this on to the person who is completing the reports so they can fill the reports out correctly. THANKS!!

Standby at Races, Fairs, Etc.

We were asked to clarify how to report incidents when the department is on standby at a car race. The department wanted to know if this was considered one report or if they needed to do a report each time the fire department personnel/apparatus went on the track.

If the department does nothing all day/night but stands by at the races, etc, only one report is necessary. However, if the department needs to go out on the track to extinguish a fire or provide EMS during a race, this would be considered a separate incident. The department would complete a report for each car fire, EMS or other type of incident during the race instead of completing a report showing they were on standby at the scene.

New Software Version, Manuals and Forms

On January 20 the latest version of the NFIRS 5.0 software was released. Major changes were made to the software. Users of the Federal DET must download and install the new version before they can use the DET again. If you try logging in to use the DET before installing the new version (5.3) you will receive an error message "Could not find On-line database. System may be down." Go to this address and login <http://www.nfirs.fema.gov>. Then click on Home Page under the User Section and then the Download

Software link once you have logged in. You want to download "NFIRS 5.0 Client Version 5.3.1(Virginia) >(FTP) 28.9 MB". After you download the file (NFIRSV531.exe) double-click on the filename to install. An install wizard will start and you will be asked what type of installation. You will want to do the Typical install. The first time you open the software after it is installed you may be prompted to download updates. You will want to say yes to this so that you keep your software current.

Those departments using vendor software should have received an upgrade from their vendor. If you have not received new software, please contact your vendor and request the latest version so you remain current. If you fail to keep your software current, problems will occur with the data you send me, and I will not be able to accept the data.

Due to the changes the Reference Handbook, now called the Complete Reference Guide, and the paper forms have been revised. The new manual and forms may be downloaded at <http://www.nfirs.fema.gov> and then clicking on Reference Guide (manual) or Design Documentation (forms) and scrolling down until you see the link NFIRS 5.0 Paper Forms. You will need Adobe Reader to view and print these. The manual will take awhile to download as it is 488 pages.

Fire Department Resource Inventory

Enclosed in this mailing is a Fire Department Resource Inventory (orange sheet). This sheet contains all the information that we are currently keeping on each fire department.

Please review the information and make any necessary corrections and return to me ASAP. If everything is current it is not necessary to return the sheet.

Please be sure to verify the email addresses I have. We have attempted to send some information out to those we have email addresses for and several came back indicating bad email addresses. We hope to start communicating with departments more through email so please keep us informed if your email address changes or you get an email address.

The top section is information regarding the fire department itself. The address that I am looking for is the physical address of the fire station.

The middle section of the form is personnel information - Chief, Secretary and Training Officer. I mainly would like names, but the other information, e.g., phone numbers and email address is beneficial. You do not have to enter address information if you do not want

mail sent to your home. I am asking for the chief's Social Security Number. This information will not be given out to anyone - I am only asking for it so I have it on hand just in case you forget to put it on the payment letter (see below).

The last section is Mailing Address. This is the address where you want all department mail sent. If you want it sent to the department address, chief, secretary, etc. then you should enter that address here.

Fire Department Payment Letter

Also enclosed in this mailing is the Fire Department Payment letter (purple sheet) if you meet the requirements set out in state statute to be reimbursed for submitting reports - the chief cannot receive more than \$50 a year in compensation for his duties as chief. I'm also enclosing a return envelope that you can use to return the bottom portion of the letter.

The form must be completed by the Chief (he can do whatever he wants with the money - give it to the department or the person actually completing the reports or keep it). Chief - please remember to enter your Social Security Number and sign the form. Payment cannot be made without these and the form will be returned for completion delaying payment. After the form is returned it will take 4-6 weeks to process.

If you do not want to be reimbursed do not return the form. If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

Year-End Report

I am also enclosing a summary report of all incidents submitted for 2003 in this mailing. If there is not a report enclosed then I did not receive any data from your department. It is not too late to send your reports in, but please do so by April 15, 2004.

2003 SFM Act and Related Laws

I have updated the Act Book and the new version will be available in PDF format on the website, www.sfm.state.ne.us. If anyone needs a hard copy mailed to them we will provide one copy free. Additional copies will cost \$5. Be sure to include a check or money order for the amount due, if any.

You will need to allow 4-6 weeks for us to have these printed once we find out how many copies are needed.

NFIRS 5.0 Reminders

NOTE: References to fields and sections are by the names the USFA gave the objects. Some software vendors changed the names and/or locations. Hopefully you will still understand what I am referring to.

If not, let me know.

- ◆ Don't forget to keep your software up-to-date. All vendors should be releasing new versions in the near future due to changes/enhancements requested by USFA.
 - ◆ It is not recommended that you use social security numbers as the Officer in Charge ID or the Member Making Report ID. Copies of reports may be given to insurance companies or anyone who requests the information. Someone who gets your social security number could use it to steal your identity. I will black out this information on any reports I give out. I have stopped entering the information into the computer. The ID field is optional and can be left blank.
 - ◆ When completing reports for contained fires (Incident Type 113-118) don't forget to complete H2 Detector. This field is required for these Incident Types.
 - ◆ I have received a few reports that mention in the narrative that there were fire casualties and/or exposure fires. Whenever there are civilian fire-related casualties the Civilian Fire Casualty module must be completed. The Fire Service Casualty module should be completed any time a firefighter is injured regardless of the incident type. It does not matter whether your department provides EMS or not. If the fire is in your jurisdiction it is your responsibility to complete the report for the fire and to also report any casualties.
- If there are exposure fires, an additional report needs to be completed for each exposure. The incident number is the same as the original fire but the exposure number will change from 000 to 001, 002, etc depending on the number of exposures. Dollar loss should be broken down by each fire. Do not report the total loss of all the fires on the original fire report then show zero on the exposure reports, unless there was zero dollar loss for that fire.
- ◆ When completing the mobile property information please note that for Section H2 on the Fire Module there is a separate code for automobile/ passenger car and pickup. A passenger vehicle is code 11 and a pickup truck is code 22.
 - ◆ Incident numbers must be all numeric (1234567). Letters or special characters (-, /) are not allowed in the field.
 - ◆ The intention of the Exposure Number field on the Basic Module is not to enter the number of exposures that may have occurred but as an identifier for the

reports that need to be completed. If there are exposure fires, a separate report needs to be completed for each exposure. The incident number would be the same on all reports but the exposure number would change - 000 for the original, 001 for the first exposure, 002 for the second, etc.

- ◆ When entering the location information for an incident on the Basic Module, please utilize all the fields available and use them as intended. The information is broken down the way it is in order to utilize GIS (mapping) software.

Street address: The number should be entered in the Number/Mile field, the prefix (East, North, South, West, Southwest, etc) should be entered in the Street Prefix field, the street name in the Street or Highway field, the street type (street, road, lane, circle, highway, etc) in the Street Type field and if any suffix (East, South, North, West, Southwest, etc) in the Suffix field. Please do not put the entire address in the Street or Highway field except for Rural Routes as noted below.

For an address like 246 Highway 2, enter the 246 in the Number/Mile field, the 2 in the Street or Highway field and Highway in the Street Type field.

Apartment, suite or lot numbers should be entered in the Apartment/Suite/Room field. Please do not enter a pound sign (#) before the number or Apt 5, Suite 21, etc. Just enter the number 5 or 21 or 5A.

Intersection: Enter one street or highway in the Street or Highway field and the other in the Cross Street or Directions field.

Rural Routes: Some departments enter rural route address (RR 1, Box 20 or HC1, Box 5). If used these should be entered entirely in the Street or Highway field. We would prefer that instead of using this type of address you enter the information as directions. Reports will not be returned if RR or HC are used.

Highway/Mile Marker: If the incident occurred on a highway or the interstate at a certain mile marker, enter the mile marker number in the Number/Mile field, the highway number in the Street or Highway field and Highway in the Street Type field. If the incident occurred on the interstate enter I 80 or I-80 in the Street or Highway field and leave Street Type blank.

- ◆ The EMS module is only allowed for Incident Types 100-243, 311, 321-323, 351-381, 400-431 and 900. If you need to complete an EMS module for an Incident Type other than stated above you may want to take another look at the chosen code and make sure it is

the appropriate one to describe the incident.

◆ If a fire rekindles and you return to the scene, a new incident report will need to be completed. This is considered a new incident and should be treated as such although you can indicate it is a rekindle of a previous fire by entering code 72 in the field Factors Contributing to Ignition on the Fire Module. Any dollar loss would be for any new damage done by the rekindle. Do not include the dollar amount previously reported on the original incident.

◆ I've had a couple of questions on how to enter a Canadian address. In Appendix C of the Handbook there are Canadian postal codes listed, but I have discovered the federal system isn't set up yet to accept them. I have checked with the NFIRS Help Desk and you should be able to enter OO (two letter O's not zeros) in the state field. Then you will need to enter the entire city and state information in the City field.

If you are using a vendor's software and they allow you to choose the Canadian postal codes, go ahead and select them and I'll deal with any errors that may occur when I receive the data.

◆ Software users: Please include your FDID number and timeframe in the filename (example: 99001June02.txt). Having this information in the filename helps to locate the right file if needed.

◆ The intention of the Exposure Number field on the Basic Module is not to enter the number of exposures that may have occurred. If there are exposure fires, a separate report needs to be completed for each exposure. The incident number would be the same on all reports but the exposure number would change - 000 for the original, 001 for the first exposure, 002 for the second, etc.